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Finding Homeplace: Exploring the Experiences of Black Women in the City of Richmond

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Urban and Regional Planning at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by
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Abstract

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By Mariah Williams, B.A Sociology

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The planning efforts of African-Americans in the United States remained largely hidden throughout much of early planning history. Although African-Americans engaged in unique planning practices of their own, ones that significantly shaped the social and economic fabric within their communities, planning literature has tended to problematize them within the urban environment instead of celebrating their unique differences and experiences. Black women, despite their significant contributions to the urban fabric of numerous American cities, remain even more silenced throughout the planning profession. The unique ways they experience the urban environment, what they value in the built environment and how they speak about their experiences in urban spaces have been unexplored by planning researchers. Using Richmond, Virginia as a case study, a city where black women comprise almost a third of the total population and that struggles to reconcile with its past and find new meaning in many of its spaces, this study will explore how black women experience the built environment and examine what they value and where they feel a sense of safety, belonging and inclusiveness in a city where race and planning have long been contentious.

Keywords: urban planning, African-American, women, Richmond, belonging, safety, inclusion

Introduction

Purpose of Research

Despite the depiction of African-American communities as helpless and as victims of less than ideal urban conditions, there has always been a rich culture of grassroots community development and organizing (McDougall, 1993, Thomas 1994, Connerly & Wilson, 1997). Many of these efforts were centered on enhancing economic, political and educational opportunities, but they also focused on shaping the social fabric of everyday life and allowed for the development of black vernacular spaces that became vital to African-American culture (McDougall, 1993). Black people developed ways of being and living in urban environments in resistance to their social conditions but also as a way to show their persistence despite these conditions.

Traditional planning history has often used the archetypal white, upper middle class male as a lens through which to explore the evolution of the planning field, regularly failing to acknowledge the unique ways black people have engaged in planning within their own communities. The role of black women in these communities, while undeniable, has been silenced even more. Using an intersectional lens in planning to not only explore the roles of black women in the urban environment but the ways in which their identities and positions in society inform how they experience urban spaces, is important for planners who seek to more effectively work with and understand black women in an urban context. Highlighting what Sanderock calls (1998) "insurgent planning histories" (p. 2) amongst black women, allows for the field to create a more inclusive dialogue between professional planners and community members (Healey, 1992) in order to bridge the divide between grassroots and top-down planners (Davidoff, 1965) and to more intentionally include black women in the planning process.

Planning theory, which provides a theoretical framework for the practical application of planning, attempts to incorporate equity and inclusion by employing models such as communicative/collaborative planning but still, these models lack a true understanding of the uniqueness of black women as a part of the urban fabric in terms of how they experience everyday urban living and what aspects of the environment they value. Using the city of Richmond, Virginia as a case study, this research compares the different ways black and white women experience the urban environment.

In the next section, I frame my research by exploring attempts in the urban planning field to broaden the scope of the practice by taking an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach to planning, which can help transform what we think of as planning and allow the voices of marginalized groups, such as black women, to be captured. I then provide a review of planning history literature and explore how it has addressed issues of race, followed by review of literature on women and urban planning. Next, I examine black women in urban planning followed by an interdisciplinary review of literature that provides additional context for understanding black women's experiences in the urban environment. I end with a review of planning theories and how planners can apply them when working to better understand black women. After the data and methods section, I provide a review of this study's findings. I conclude by discussing the further implications of this research in understanding the unique position of black women in the urban environment with the hope that current and future planners see the value of incorporating these narratives into their work, particularly in the city of Richmond.

The city of Richmond, Virginia

The city of Richmond has a unique racial and regional history and is distinctly connected to the country's long history of slavery, as it once served as the capital of the Confederacy

(Campbell, 2012). Not only did slavery intricately shape the economic fabric of the city, its legacy significantly transformed the urban landscape and more specifically, the experiences of African-Americans. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, like other cities in the urban South, Richmond fostered a "separate city" that remained the "foundation for black economic and political ascendancy (Silver, 2014). Most notably, Jackson Ward was the epicenter of African-American life and culture in the city of Richmond. The area was home to historic figures such as Maggie Walker and Giles Jackson and served as the political, social and economic hub for the African-American community in Richmond (Kensler, 2009). Jackson Ward played a crucial role in the lives of urban blacks and represented a community that remained largely self sufficient and socially and economically independent from the rest of the city until the 1930s when Richmond began to undergo changes that would work to dismantle this center of "black space" in the city.

While the development and success of Jackson Ward in its early years was actually made possible by Richmond's strict residential and zoning laws, which were passed by the City Council in 1911 (Campbell, 2012) and forcibly segregated blacks into their own neighborhoods, these same laws reinforced the systematic oppression of African-Americans throughout the entire city. Beginning in the mid 1930s, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), which was responsible for grading neighborhoods for creditworthiness, gave "every single African-American neighborhood in Richmond a D rating and redlined [their neighborhoods] for mortgages"(Campbell, 2012, p. 142).   Subsequently, as seen in countless cities throughout the nation in the 1940s, Urban Renewal policies dealt yet another blow to the predeominatly African-American Jackson Ward, which until then had been a sanctuary for African-Americans in the city.

In 1942, Gilpin Court, Richmond's first public housing project was built (Architecture Richmond) in Jackson Ward North. In an effort to generate development within city centers, planners believed the development of new public housing was a way to transform the slums. William Meacham, chairman of the Richmond Housing Authority in 1941 stated, "We are, in our first slum clearance project, fortifying and reinforcing the midtown business section of Richmond," (Slipek, 2006). The development of Gilpin Court was the model seen within city planning during the time:

> "The experience in other cities has convinced us that our housing project is correlated with city planning, since it is contributing to the development of a section of the city near the area in which the proposed civic center is to be located…The transformation of the slums into areas which will contribute to the culture of the city is our goal" (Silpek, 2006).

Urban policies in Richmond continued to disproportionately impact African-Americans when in the 1950s, state and city officials constructed the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike, present day I-95, through Jackson Ward. The construction led to the demolition and displacement of buildings and residents, mostly African-American, and further isolated residents of Gilpin Court from the development taking place in the city.

Race, place and history in the city of Richmond.

The history of race and place run deep in the city of Richmond (Hodder, 1999). The efforts made to remember and honor this history require a deeper examination of how this remembrance shapes the experiences of African-Americans who live in the city. In the former capital of the Confederacy, the memorialization of confederate heroes has been both widely celebrated by preservationists and greatly opposed by those who view the statues as a reminder of the city's racist past. Nevertheless, this debate has caused urban planners, geographers,

historians and city officials to think more critically about "guiding both the shape and meaning of urban places" in the city (Hodder, 1999, p. 438). Coupled with a distinct narrative about the city's southern identity, issues around race have intensely driven conversations and actions in regards to the socio-spatial narrative in Richmond. While the most prevalent debates regarding race and the built environment have centered around Richmond's very own Monument Avenue and its romanticization of the Civil War, as seen in other cities throughout the nation, this debate also sheds light on the need for urban planners to deeply consider Richmond's "contested terrain" (Hayden, 1995) when working to better understand how black people experience the urban environment physically, socially and emotionally.

In the city of Richmond, historic preservation policies have become a tool to preserve landmarks such as those on Monument Avenue, which calls into question the use of historic preservation in the city as a means to "preserving the meaning of place and community identity" (Lowenthal, 1985). Even if not explicitly stated, exactly whose meaning and community identity were deemed worthy of preservation were explicitly demonstrated by the city's choices to preserve sites and landmarks that were a representation of white hegemony when historic preservation policies were passed in the 1960s, thus validating the narratives presumed to belong in the city's urban fabric.

In acknowledging the importance of diverse urban narratives in shaping residents' experiences, the city of Richmond has made efforts to adopt new ways of remembering its rich and cultural past. In 2017, the city of Richmond commissioned sculptor Toby Mendez to create a statute of Maggie Walker, the first African-American woman in the United States to charter a bank. The statue was placed on the corner of Adams and Broad Streets in Jackson Ward where Walker lived, worked and advocated for community wealth building amongst African-

Americans. Although her statute adds a different story to Richmond's historical narrative, many have critiqued "the additive" approach the city has taken to memorialize black leaders. (Hodder, 1999; Rosenwald, 2017).

Without a doubt, Maggie Walker is an example of how black women engaged in localized planning activities that were not only rooted in making their communities economically self-sufficient, but in creating meaningful communal spaces that gave black people the opportunity to socialize and engage in social justice activities. In other words, the critique of adding a Maggie Walker statue is not about whether Walker is deserving of a statue, rather it calls into question whether historical statues of African-American figures truly provide meaning for African-Americans in the city and authentically shape their experience within the built environment.

Given the contentious planning history seen throughout the city of Richmond and the need to move beyond an additive approach, there is opportunity to examine how the city's more recent development has impacted residents of color, more specifically black women. Today, it is even more important to understand how black women experience the city of Richmond and to acknowledge the ways they continue to plan for their communities, using both traditional and nontraditional ways of planning.

Literature Review

Interdisciplinarity, Intersectionality and Urban Planning

From its emergence, what urban planning would encompass has always been highly contested (Dubrow and Sies, 2002). Although the field finally settled on its core goals, it was during the 1980s and early 1990s when urban planning began to attract scholars from diverse backgrounds. Those scholars had particular interests in exploring the people who existed in the

margins, including women, ethnic communities of color and other underrepresented groups (p. 202). Dubrow and Sies argue that this not only significantly expanded the scope of the practice, it allowed for interdisciplinary collaborations aimed at producing scholarship that explored "contemporary urban problems and planning practice"(p.202). It was during this time that two significant changes began to happen in the planning field: (1) Planning scholars began to broaden the lens through which they explored the discipline to include more comprehensive, less mainstream narratives of planning, (2) Social and economic inquiries began to guide the way planning scholars viewed the discipline, which created the opportunity to take an interdisciplinary approach to the practice. Dubois and Sies continue:

> "[A group of scholars] have produced a series of case studies that examine the relationship between planning's intentions and its real effects, moving beyond idealized plans to interrogate how planning gets implemented and how urban dwellers experience their environments. These studies have been supplemented by a growing number of "insurgent planning histories" that challenge the official stories of planning through analysis of the power relations underlying these historical processes that contest our operating definitions of planning" (p. 204).

The twenty-first century efforts to expand the scope of planning, both in theory and practice, not only opens the field up to more diverse analyses of urban environments, it gives a voice to marginalized groups, such as African-American women, who have often participated in more localized planning activities. It also allows for the complex intersectionalities of these communities to be recognized by revealing the "gendered experiences in tension with race, ethnicity, class, age, and sexuality" (Beebeejuan, 2015, 323).

The Evolution of Planning History

The silence of planning efforts within the black community and more specifically, of black women, is rooted in a recent emergence of planning history which did not arise as a specific field until the 1960s and 1970s (Dubrow and Sies, 2002). In order to understand some of

the profession's narrow perspectives of what constitutes planning, it is important to explore the roots from which it developed as well as the rise and institutionalization of the profession as it is practiced today (Sanderock, 1998).   Today, the planning profession attempts to take a more holistic approach to understanding how unique culture, identity and social life impact and make more intricate the considerations of planners when engaging with citizens and their physical environments. Planners are asked to make decisions that will impact the communities in which they live, and yet, throughout much of early planning history, these perspectives were largely ignored (Fainstein & DeFillipis, 2016; Sandercock 1998; Thomas, 1993). The ideologies that guided the formative years of the planning practice focused on "applying professional expertise to guide and manage the processes of metropolitan development, especially through manipulation of the physical landscape,"(Dubrow and Sies, 2002), as this was believed to be the solution to solving persistent social issues throughout the nation's metropolises (Fisherman, 2016).

Although some of the more prominent pioneers during this period (Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, to name a few) did not identify themselves as urban planners per say, they were deeply embedded in the narrative of early planning history for their commitment to developing comprehensive blueprints for the design of the physical environment. Following these formative years, the evolution of the practice throughout the twentieth century has focused on its institutionalization and professionalization within American cities, seen mostly through national, regional and city planning efforts (Fainstein & DeFillipis, 2016). These efforts solidified a mostly top-down approach to planning, whereby a scientific, technical and research-driven model placed those who worked within a cohesive planning system (planners, architects, economic developers, designers) in a position of expertise. However, these narratives

within early planning history almost completely silence what Sandercock (1998) calls "insurgent planning," where the modernist paradigm of the planning practice is challenged by introducing equally important, but often hidden, planning histories and events (p. 2). Thus, what we begin to see when exploring traditional and insurgent narratives of planning history is that a number of topics remained largely unaddressed, including race.

Race and Planning History

Race itself was an object of the practice (Sandercock, 1998) and created a narrative that communities of color were incapable and uninterested in shaping their own spaces. This meant the faces of planning became white, upper middle class men who imposed their ideas of respectable and "good city living" on those around them, who were, more often than not, working class people of color (Fainstein & DeFillipis, 2016). Race often drove decisions around how individuals were to be contained, reinforcing ideas that anything other than whiteness was pathologically deficient (Kennedy, 2000). Due to institutional racism, which also goes unaddressed in early planning history, blackness in particular, comes to signify urban decline, poverty and the decay of urban cities (Kennedy, 2000), thereby justifying planners' decisions to plan for black communities because it was assumed they lacked the technical capacity to do so for themselves.

More recently, researchers began to take into account the lack of extensive connections made between race and planning history. In *Planning History and the Black Urban Experience: Linkages and Contemporary Implications* (1994), Thomas argues that "the field of planning history often gives inadequate preparation for understanding the relationship between planning and race" (p.1 and that in order to better understand the conditions of black people in cities today, it is important to know how these conditions came to be. Using the period between WWI

and WWII as a context to analyze urban planning interventions and their effects on African-Americans, Thomas asserts that in response to the large migration of African-Americans to northern cities during this period, the profession responded by passing a number discriminatory policies, including exclusionary zoning and restrictive covenants, which worked to physically segregate African-Americans to certain areas of the city (p.3). She continues that after WWII, policies that encouraged the building of public housing and Urban Renewal further segregated African-Americans into poorer and less centralized neighborhoods, formally cementing the formation of the black ghetto (Thomas, 1994, p. 3) and isolating black communities into areas of high poverty.

Although Thomas provides an important understanding of urban planning's impact on the black community as it exists today, this particular work does not help to liberate African-Americans from objectification, meaning they still serve as recipients of planners' interventions. Her exploration reinforces the narrative of African-Americans as the passive objects of planning, where their urban experiences are still shaped by the work and policies of planners. Additionally, her work does not extensively highlight how black people responded to these urban conditions through grassroots organizing and building what McDougall (1993) describes as black vernacular communities, which will be discussed in more detail. Secondly, Thomas' examination does not acknowledge that happening simultaneously to the work of planners during this period, was the work of African-Americans who, despite segregation and poverty, were engaged in "planning activities" of their own (Fitzgerald and Howard; 2006; McDougall, 1993). In order to continue to unearth the insurgent planning histories of African-Americans and to deconstruct the narratives of traditional planning history, it is important to challenge the assumptions of "who is and who is not" a planner (Sandercock, 1998, p. 4), as this

can help provide a better understanding of the unique ways that communities employ planning practices and how these practices are based on their views of the urban environment.

Fitzgerald and Howard (2006) trace the active involvement of African-Americans in planning by uncovering a "black planning history" that pre-dates the first national planning conference in 1909 (p. 50). They argue that even prior to this event, African-Americans were engaged in activities they believed could help them better understand and enhance their living conditions. Exploring the early works of W.E.B Dubois, an African-American sociologist whose work is rarely mentioned throughout planning history, Fitzgerald and Howard reveal how using many of the tools that most planners today would recognize as demographic analysis, citizen surveys and community asset analyses, Dubois set out to understand what he identified as the "Negro Problem" (p. 51). His work *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study (1899)* was one of the first studies to explore the physical and social environments of African-Americans in an urban context and to present their conditions as a symptom of larger social and systemic issues such as slavery, prejudice and environmental issues (Fitzgerald and Howard, 1993).

Although Dubois was not a professional planner, he did engage in work within what Assche et al. (2012) would identify as a "planning system," where a web of organizations are involved in the planning process, not simply planners. Therefore, Dubois' research on Philadelphia's black community can be seen as a part of early African-American planning activities, and yet, it was never recognized as such. Though academic in nature, Dubois' work highlights how African-Americans engaged in planning activities and were actively involved in understanding their conditions in an effort to change them.

Connerly and Wilson (1997) describe the early planning efforts of African-Americans in Alabama. Engaging in more traditional planning, citizen projects included neighborhood

beautification, street improvements, zoning and the development of parks and public space. According to Connerly and Wilson, "by the early 1970s, when Birmingham's traditionally White and elite-dominated approach to planning came under question, the city's Black community was prepared to put forth an alternative, bottoms up approach that built on decades of experience at organizing Black neighborhoods for community improvement" (p. 207). The citizens of Alabama developed a formal and sustainable planning model through community organizing efforts that allowed them to improve their communities without the help of professional planners, providing another example of how African-Americans engaged in planning activities. Complementary to these planning efforts were more nuanced and subversive ways of planning that also took place within African-American communities that were equally as importantly as more traditional planning efforts.

Unearthing planning history in the black community.

Black Baltimore: A New Theory of Community (1993) explores the creation of Baltimore's black community as a means of upward mobility after Emancipation (p. 1). McDougall describes how Baltimoreans were systematically shut out of America's political and economic institutions and as a result, were forced to create their own. In framing the importance of this community in Baltimore's efforts to enhance the social, economic and political conditions of black people, he describes it as the embodiment of an entire vernacular culture, "home-made, homespun, and home-grown, develop[ed] gender roles, home life, and gossip as community institutions such as churches and civic associations" (p.3). Community organizations played a crucial role in advancing the conditions of black people in Baltimore, and where traditional planning efforts had abandoned their communities, black Baltimoreans became deeply embedded in the work of these organizations on the ground.

Another aspect of engagement that McDougall describes is "base communities" which were, "small peer groups of perhaps a dozen or two dozen people who share[d] a similar philosophy, life condition or social objective" (p. 7). These base communities were an important, yet nontraditional display of action amongst community members engaging in the planning process, where they could, "commiserate with one another and prepare for the next day's fight" (p. 161). This "third way" of citizen engagement provided a platform for black people to engage in "everyday" planning efforts but also accounted for the need to have therapeutic spaces in their communities where they could feel safe and where work was not always expected of them (McDougall, 1993, p. 186). It is in this description of black Baltimore that the insurgent planning histories of the black urban communities are unearthed and the unique foundations of their efforts are further understood. These efforts included, the employment of planning practices to shape the physical and social environment on a larger scale and the creation of micro-communities within the physical environment for black people to be amongst and celebrate each other.

Women and Urban Planning

Similar to race, the exploration of gender in planning history remained mostly invisible until the 1960s when both Ada Louise Huxtable and Jane Jacobs published major works critiquing planners' approach to developing the physical environment and its impact on women (Fainstein & Servon, 2005). Most planning practices and policies took a universal approach, or assumed a male subject entirely (p. 3). Today, planners have began to recognize that using gender as a lens through which to explore women and planning helps to reveal how planning efforts amongst women are different from those traditionally explored throughout the practice. Not only does it deconstruct the binary of private and public spheres that women have often been

relegated to within the planning field, it also highlights the role of safety in shaping the these experiences. This section will review literature that explores how women have been dealt with throughout the practice and that highlights their unique experiences in the built environment. It will also explore the intersectionality of race and gender by specifically examining how black women have been both the objects of the planning practice as well as the active subjects who have shaped planning practices according to what their communities needed the most.

Literature on planning and gender has often explored how planning and design forced women into dichotomous public and private spheres, whereby planning decisions reinforced traditional gender roles (Hayden 1980; Holcomb, 1984; Fainstein and Servon, 2005).   Prior to the 1960s, key topics that emerged within planning in regards to women were how they experienced the home, workplace and community (Fainstein & Servon, 2005). However, these aspects of women's lives were treated as separate entities, with planners often failing to connect each of them in their attempts to understand how women experienced their physical environments. In What *Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work* (1980) Hayden explores how the separation of these spheres fail to acknowledge the increasing presence of women in the workforce and the need for their physical environments to be developed in a way that reflect their many responsibilities in the public and private spheres (p. 171). She asserts that the form of the physical environment limits, rather than supports, women's roles as both caregivers and active members of the workforce, and calls for planners to see these separate spheres as a whole system (Hayden, 1980). Holcomb (1984) presents a similar critique of planners' development of the built environment, asserting that development within cities have not transformed with the changing roles of women, particularly

in terms of physically linking women to necessary social services and providing adequate public transportation as well as access to affordable housing (p. 23).

The exploration of women and planning also shed light on how issues of safety impact their experience in the built environment. More contemporary research has shown that women have tended to feel more physically vulnerable within the physical environment (Foster and Giles-Corti, 2008) and that these vulnerabilities have often led to concerns for physical safety. Compounded with minority status, ethnic minorities experience additional concerns regarding safety (Hale, 1996). However, these sorts of topics were not always framed through the specific lens of gender, thus limiting planners' ability to adequately understand the experiences of women, particularly women of color.

Much like the critiques of second wave feminism for failing to take an intersectional approach to tackling gender inequality, Boys (1990) argues that in planning there still exists a tendency to deal only with the experiences of white, upper-middle class women in the urban environment and to ignore differences of race, class, sexuality, mobility and location (p.250). She continues that while researchers have critiqued various planning interventions and development efforts for failing to more seamlessly connect the public and private spheres (i.e. home and work) to meet the needs of white women forced into the workforce, this viewpoint is less applicable to women of color and working class women who have traditionally worked outside of the household and taken on domestic roles (Boys, 1990). The narrative that emerges within literature connecting planning and gender often normalizes women's struggle to be independent outside of the private sphere (i.e. home) and to more easily navigate the physical environment, and presumes that women of color share this experience. However, as Boys asserts, "black women's understanding of the home and its values differ from that of many white

women" (p. 252). The social positions of black, working class women are complex, and therefore have not always fit neatly into the public/private space dichotomy as easily as white, upper-middle class women. While home as a physical space was often portrayed as somewhere from which white women desired to escape in order to exist more freely in the public realm, this physical space actually represented a safe haven, both physically and psychologically for black women, thereby complicating their experience within the urban environment and requiring an additional exploration of black women and planning.

Black Women.

Carby (1992) argues that the early responses to black women in the urban environment were driven by the state's desire to control the movement of black bodies from the rural South to northern cities during the Great Migration, where "the movement of black female bodies generated a series moral panic" (p. 739). To remedy the social disorder that resulted from the presumed sexual deviances of black women migrating to the city, a number of policies were implemented to police the bodies of black women and confine them within the physical environment. Sandercock (1992) presents a similar examination of early planning history's portrayal of black, working class women that links urban problems to their presumed inability to conform to changes in their environment (p. 5). The beliefs about black women in the urban environment were rooted in both sexist and racist assumptions that on the one hand, their "female virtue" needed to be protected within the physical environment, and on the other, they were the primary cause of social problems because of their tendency to defy "hard work" (Carby, 1992, p. 740). Although several recommendations were made to control black women in the urban environment, Carby describes that a significant planning intervention was the development

of lodging designed to physically "keep black women off of the streets"(p. 741), thus confining them to spaces where they could be policed.

Residential segregation and the development of the home as safe space.

Unfortunately, the history of public housing development in the United States is also the history of segregated housing, as the welfare reforms passed during the New Deal. However, this political periods provides additional context for understanding the containment and residential exclusion of black women in the urban environment and the spaces that grew out of these conditions. Although public housing was not originally built to house the poorest of the poor, a number of federal policies emerged throughout the 20th century to solidify public housing as such (Stoloff, 2004). While the Housing Act of 1937 formally introduced public housing on the federal level, many cities had provided subsidized low-cost housing, specifically to the "submerged middle class," who were temporarily outside of the labor market during the Depression (p. 1). Following WWII and a number of efforts put forth by the federal government to encourage homeownership amongst American families, racism and the privatization of the housing industry led to policies that disproportionately impacted African-Americans' ability to move out of the city to the suburbs (Hirsch, 2000). While white people were able to secure mortgage loans, fully participate in the growing privatization of the housing industry and remain unaffected by restrictive covenants, it was assumed that " incomes among minorities were so low as to disqualify them for the benefits of the FHA insurance system," thus disbarring them from any opportunity for mobility altogether (Hirsch, 2000, p.162). Moreover, the federal government adopted a policy similar to that of the Federal Home Owner Loan Corporation (HOLC), creating a rating system for evaluating the risk level of underwriting mortgage loans, with minority neighborhoods being given the greatest lending risk. Many working class African-Americans

remained confined to inner cities, unaware at the time that additional federal housing policies would further limit their options for mobility. With the 1937 Housing Act legislation came a number of discriminatory site selection practices that disproportionately placed public housing in predominantly minority neighborhoods (Hirsch, 2000). The Housing Act of 1949, which mandated additional public housing, in addition to a number of economic development policies proposed to spur employment and the development of city centers, worked to further isolate African-Americans in poor areas of the city (Stoloff, 2004) where they remained cut off from economic opportunities and quality education and social services.

The history of residential confinement plays a significant role in understanding the planning interventions that have most significantly impacted black women's experiences in the urban environment. This confinement, while proven to be detrimental to the fabric and economic vitality of the black community, also provides a context for examining the role of black women in shaping their urban environments despite isolation and the social conditions that resulted from it. It also reinforces how, unlike for white women, the home emerged as a safe place in which to retreat and not a place from which to escape (Boys, 2005).

Although planning literature has tended to explore the experience of black women in the urban environment through the lens of problematization, policing and confinement, beneath the surface of these narratives reside the emergence of a unique community and culture of activism, organizing and place-making that was uniquely shaped by black women. The reality is that for much of the twentieth century when planning was emerging as a practice, black women were not permitted to participate in the formal profession (Spain, 2000). However, this did not stop them from contributing to their urban fabric by creating what Spain (2000) describes as "redemptive spaces," where "black men, women and children found respite from harsh conditions in the

industrializing city" (p.105). hooks (1990) provides a similar analysis of black women in the urban environment by describing what she calls homeplace, "a place where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist" (p.384). Black women were the makers of these homeplaces and were instrumental in what hooks describes as the following:

> "Making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where [they] could be affirmed in [their] minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship and deprivation, where [they] could restore [themselves] to the dignity denied [them] on the outside in the public world "(bell hooks, 1990, p.384).

hooks' homeplace was both restorative and resistive for black people. In the midst of poverty, racism, segregation and often times, blatant hatred, it provided refuge for the black body and represented a sense of spiritual and redemptive healing for the black community. Black women were instrumental in shaping homeplace and in spreading the spirit of liberation that it invoked. Although homeplace can be placed physically inside the home, it can also be understood as a metaphysical condition that black women strived to permeate throughout their physical environment, where the city was also seen as a home that needed to be protected and cultivated into a space where they could feel a sense of belonging. (Spain, 2000). Finally, hooks' description of homeplace is multifaceted; It is both political and social, in that it is the place where black women cultivate their identities in response to larger political and social systems that fail to acknowledge their experiences and that attempt to strip them of their voices altogether. Thus, the homeplace, both inside and outside of the home, is where black women did the work necessary to sustain their communities and where they felt a greater sense of belonging and inclusion.

Black Feminist Thought.

Black Feminist Thought has long championed for black women to promote their distinctive "standpoint of self, community and society" (Collin, 2000, p.5) in social conditions that have actively worked to keep their voices deep in the shadows. Collins also asserts that the politics of Black Feminist Thought deals with "dialectic oppression and activism, the tension between the suppression of African American's women's ideas and [their] intellectual activism in the face of that suppression" (p.6). In her description of Black Feminist Thought Collins highlights yet another example of black women continuing to struggle for liberation and for their voices to be heard in the midst of unjust social conditions.

Additionally, similar to Dubois' assertion of "double consciousness" (Dubois, 1903), Collins argues that black women more intricately bear the burden of having to navigate two spaces, both physical and metaphysical, where they are constantly under the watchful eye of those in more dominant positions (i.e. white people and men). This multifaceted position forces black women to adopt a distinctive way of being and communicating within their environments, one where they must "become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor"(Lorde, 1990) and more inconspicuously develop languages and ways of being that restore their position and resist dominant ideologies that were built upon their exclusion. . By doing so, black women both actively and passively shape their environments because they must constantly seek out or create spaces where they can simply "be" and are not forced to constantly juggle conflicting identities and positions.

The experience of black women, both as subjects and objects within the planning practice, provides a context to better understand the role black women have played in shaping their environments and how this distinctive role forces the field to "plan differently" in light of these experiences (Sandercock, 2000).

Black and Embodied Place-making.

Emerging throughout literature on black women in the urban environment is a distinct and rich culture of placemaking, practices rooted in fostering a unique sense of community within the built environment. This section will review literature that explores how people shape spaces within their physical environment and provide additional context for understanding the ways black women have done this in their own environments.

Rhetoric of identity, creativity and authenticity are seen throughout the majority of placemaking literature. Placemaking is a constantly evolving process that requires various social and political interactions to take place in order to transform the physical landscape into something that has meaning within a community (Sen & Silverman, 2013). Where planners may focus on ensuring that people have access spaces, placemaking allows individuals the right to make these spaces their own. Sen and Silverman assert that the "physical environment cannot exist without the human inhabitants who experience it in their everyday lives" and that "its meaning is dependent upon the larger political and economic contexts within which these individuals operate in any specific location" (p. 3). The ways that individuals create a sense of place incorporates the usage of symbols, actions, and general ways of being that may signify how they view themselves within a larger social, political and economic context. Most often, placemaking is explored in the context of public space, as this allows for a more direct exploration of how different communities uniquely use space that is designed for everyone.

However, literature also reveals that placemaking happens in private and isolation as well. As highlighted throughout this review, there has been a tendency within planning to deal with the black body within the urban environment through confinement, yet black people have persisted by finding their own ways to develop community, reshape their spaces and rejoice

despite their conditions. An example of this act of placemaking is called black joy, which

embodies the manifestation of restorative spaces for black people and reflects how the physical

environment might be used to create spaces that allow for both physical and psychological

safety:

> "Black joy allows us the space to stretch our imaginations beyond what
> we previously thought possible and allows us to theorize a world in
> which white supremacy does not dictate our everyday lives. House
> parties, backyard cookouts, and other spaces where black bodies gather in
> celebration produce rich and profound moments in which black love and
> laughter "lifts everyone slightly above the present" and allows to feel, to
> know in our bones, what black utopia might be like" (Johnson, 2015).

The concept of black joy space is supported by a number of works on placemaking

(Gieryn 2000; Hunter, Patillo, Robinson & Taylor, 2016) and is rooted in blacks' attempt to

reclaim and resist oppressive conditions within their own environments, similar to homeplace. In

Black Placemaking: Celebration, Play and Poetry (2016), black placemaking "privileges the

creative, celebratory, playful, pleasurable and poetic expressions of being black and being

around other black people in the city (p.31). Thus, black joy becomes a physical manifestation of

resistance: black people celebrating and rejoicing in spite of certain conditions in their

environment. Black joy spaces become the sites for this celebratory resistance and unlike most

traditional planning literature that has tended to problematize the black body in the urban

environment, Hunter et. al highlight how black people "make [a] place amidst and in spite of

those realities" (p. 32). Placemaking implies that individuals have to be intentional about

creating and, in some cases, recreating spaces in order to build a sense of identity and place.

Social Geography

Social geography attempts to understand how physical spaces come to have meaning

based on those who inhabit them and the interactions they have within the space. Neely and

Sumara (2011) connect race and space by first introducing key characteristics of space. They assert that space is "contested, fluid and historical, relational and interactional and infused with difference and inequality" (p. 1938). A key characteristic that emerges as it relates to how black people exist in the urban environment is contested space, which is defined as "geographic locations where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control or resources and access to power" (Neely and Sumara, 2011, p. 1939). They describe the situation that has confronted black people throughout much of planning history, where traditional urban planning professionals have envisioned the use of the urban environment in very different ways than marginalized groups, thus spatially containing them in order to utilize space in the ways deemed most suitable for advancing a goal.

To further connect this idea of contested space to race, Neely and Sumara introduce Caroline Knowles' (2003) research on race where she argues that in order to adequately study race, one must understand the spatial dimensions of "race-making" (p.1940). She asserts that "[space] interacts with people and their activities as an ongoing set of possibilities in which race is fabricated (Knowles 2003). Thus, race is made through a set of ongoing interactions within space where people are the drivers of certain activities that work to give their racial identities meaning within that space. Using this framework, blackness was and continues to be created in spaces where black people interact and participate in activities they are a part of and value. For black women, these activities vary and can include shaping sites of black joy, seeking out sites to uplift themselves and each other, developing other ways of being in space that reinforce the uniqueness of their blackness and womanhood and that make it easier to juggle their different social positions within their environment..

Planning Theory

If the goal of planning theory is to offer insight into how urban planners are to do their work in the field, it is important to acknowledge that differences within communities should shape these ways of planning. Where rational planning has failed to capture the black urban experience, contemporary planning theories that address issues of equity within the field have emerged and are often employed when working with communities of color. Planning theorists dedicated to making the practice and discipline more inclusive have acknowledged the need to change *how* planning is thought about by those who practice it, which includes ensuring they are aware of the role race plays in planning (Thomas, 2008).

Other planning theories, both process and outcome based, attempt to rectify where rational theory goes wrong by introducing concepts of equity, inclusion and diversity, but even they sometimes fail to capture the importance of understanding the social identities that marginalized groups develop within their environment, social identities based on language, ways of communicating and ways of being, ways that cannot neatly be put into planning's traditional boxes.

Language, Communication and Inequality

Redemptive spaces, for example, are as much about a way of communicating for black women as they are about ways of existing and experiencing their environment. Black women's double consciousness requires them to constantly shift back and forth between two worlds, which inevitably results in them acquiring two, sometimes more, distinct languages and ways of communicating. On the one hand, they may be forced to speak one way to the outside world, even more so if this world consists predominantly of those a part of a dominant group. On the other hand, in the privacy of their homes or in the presence of other black women, they develop a

different way of speaking, a way that may more authentically reflects who they are. According to Jones (2004), this "shifting" reflects the double lives of black women in America and therefore, the development or preservation places such as homeplace, which offer environments for black women to freely interact, becomes increasingly important for planners who want to more effectively plan with and for black women.

Sanderock and Forsyth (2007) explore planning through the lens of feminist theory and critique the ways that language and communication used in rational planning disempower the voices of marginalized communities. By employing a model that privileges scientific and technical languages over the everyday voices of the community, Sandercock and Forsyth assert that this model causes communication inequalities to emerge in areas such as citizen participation. They also argue that in order to "bring women out of silence" (p.71) planning theory must continue to acknowledge the intrinsic inequalities in professional communication and citizen participation. Even beyond simply knowing and understanding, women must be engaged in unique ways within the planning profession, and the language black women use to communicate their experiences in the urban environment are important for planners who hope to validate their voices within the planning processes. By not recognizing how black women talk about space and place in an urban context, planners miss the opportunity to transform both planning processes and outcomes.

The communicative planning model does attempt to reconcile these shortcomings by encouraging face-to-face dialogue between all stakeholders in order to develop a strategy to address a shared problem (Innes & Gruber, 2005), a problem that typically arises with communicative action where stakeholders develop solutions to a shared problem. At the root of communicative planning theory is its goal to develop a more democratic planning process where

the subjective narrative of a stakeholder is just as valuable as an objective viewpoint. It also acknowledges that there are multiple types of knowledge, and both the planner and the citizen are seen as expert.

Healey (1992) expands on communicative planning by asserting the notion of aesthetic relativism as a way of understanding how various stakeholders think about experiences in the urban environment. She states, "this focuses on the self-conscious autonomous individual, existing, *being,* to be extricated from the oppression of functional systems based on scientific rationalism (p. 148). She continues, "this leads to a celebration and enjoyment of differences experienced individually rather than collectively"(p. 149). Although Healey is writing in response to British planning literature, her exploration aesthetic relativism is particularly important as it pertains to the experience of black women in the urban environment who can be more intentionally engaged in the planning process through communicative planning. While there should be an emphasis on the shared voice of stakeholders, there must also be recognition that black women experience their environments differently. Therefore, as planners engage with black women using communicative planning, this must be acknowledged to develop a more inclusive process. As planners, in learning about the history of the practice in the United States, we are often taught about the field's failures in developing the physical environment and in engaging and understanding what different communities value. This research highlights the intentionality needed in the planning field to address planning history's blindpspots and more importantly, to begin to ensure black women that their ways of experiencing the urban environment and voices matter.

Throughout the literature have emerged several perspectives that can inform how we understand the unique experiences of women in the urban environment and can further shape

how we grapple with the intersections of race and gender. In many ways, it can be argued that there exists a spectrum for measuring how women experience their environments. On the one hand, there are more conventional ways of thinking that planners have used to understand the urban environment, leading them to make assumptions about how these shape women's overall experiences. On the other hand, compounding these assumptions with race and gender reveal the nuances in how more marginalized groups experience the urban environment and highlight the more emotional and psychological aspects of these experiences.

I assert that uncovering the distinct experiences of the black woman in the urban environment is a way to defend and advocate for the respect and consideration of these differences in planning and urban communities. Understanding how black women themselves view their urban environment also provides an opportunity for planners to distinguish black women as a unique set of clients within the practice because it exposes the nuanced ways that they live in cities. It also forces planners to see black women as planners in their own right by highlighting the nontraditional ways that black women have taken to plan within their communities in order to create spaces for black people to feel a sense of inclusion and belonging. Thus, this research aims to capture the experiences of black women in the city of Richmond through the lens of safety, belonging, inclusion and usefulness. These measures were chosen because they capture a range of experiences that women can have within the urban environment.

Research Questions

1. What spaces do black and white women identify as meaningful in the city of Richmond?
   a. What spaces and places do black and white women identify as feeling a sense of safety, belonging, inclusiveness and usefulness in the city of Richmond?

2. How would black and white like to be engaged during the planning process in the city of Richmond?

3. How do black and white women describe feelings of safety, belonging, inclusion and usefulness within a specific space in the city?

4. How do black and white women experience the urban environment in the city of Richmond?

Methods

This research study took a mixed methods approach, which included focus groups, community mapping and an exploratory walk through a The Fan, a neighborhood in the city of Richmond. All methods were combined during data analysis. This section will provide an in-depth overview of the qualitative approaches for this research followed by an overview of methods, including participant data, data collection and data analysis methods. Table 1 provides a breakdown of research questions and corresponding methods.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a qualitative research method that provide individuals the opportunity to engage in the process of understanding their experiences within a group context while placing the researcher in a role to facilitate, analyze and make meaning of interactions and communications within a specific context (Morgan, 1996, p.130). They are distinguishable from group interviews in that they are specifically designed for the purposes of research, facilitated by a researcher interested in a specific area of study and require some form of group interaction (Morgan, 1996). According to Kitzinger (1994) the social interactions that take place between participants during focus groups are important for researchers who want to explore people's

views and experiences in relation to others and states, "We are none of us self-contained, isolated, static entities; we are part of complex and overlapping social, familial and collegiate networks. Our personal behavior is not cut off from public discourses and our actions do not happen in a cultural vacuum"(p.117). Therefore, it was important to understand white and black women's perspectives on living in Richmond in relation to each other while also offering participants the opportunity to grapple with complex urban issues in a group setting. Focus groups were selected for this research for several reasons: (1) They allowed women to discuss their experiences living in the city as a group which was important because it provided an environment for these experiences to be validated by other women, (2) They gave participants the opportunity to connect with other women around certain issues pertaining to the city of Richmond while being guided by the researcher, (3) Separate focus groups for black and white women increased participants' comfort and cohesion as they disclosed personal information (Morgan, 1996).

Community Mapping

Community mapping is a tool used by planners to understand and assess the assets of a neighborhood or community through directly involving citizen voices (Archer, Luansang, & Boonmahathanakorn, 2012). The tool also provides an opportunity for members of a community to identify significant problems and help planners better understand the root causes of these issues. In attempting to remove the historical dichotomy between local and expert knowledge, community mapping validates the "emotional experiences encountered in everyday life" (Corburn, 2003, p. 421) and gives participants the opportunity to validate their experiences and knowledge of the local community (Parker, 2006). It also allows the researcher to "accumulate,

construct, and apply knowledge and technologies in real time, simultaneously producing new questions for research and enhanced practice" (p. 482).

Community mapping was employed for this research for several reasons: (1) It gave women an opportunity to identify spaces throughout the city that had value and that they were connected to in some way, (2) It allowed women to provide insight into their local communities and gave the researcher the opportunity to identify spatial patterns between the participant groups by race (3) Using the maps allowed the researcher to construct a new spatial understanding of the different ways that black and white women experience the city. During the community mapping session, women were asked to answer various questions by placing pins into a wall size map of the city of Richmond, using different colors as indicators of the ways their experiences related to key research questions.

Exploratory Walk

Exploratory walks bring physical bodies into a space (Sweet & Escalante, 2015) and allow participants to observe and describe their visceral experience as they walk through a particular environment. Given that this study aimed to understand white and black women experienced the urban environment, the purpose of this walk was to, in real time, record their reactions to being in a physical setting in the city. During this activity, participant groups were led on a walk through a neighborhood in Richmond and asked to record their experiences during the walk and to provide additional insight into their experiences after. The purpose of this method was to assess how black and white women responded differently to the same space in-person.

Table 1:Overview of Focused Research Questions and Methods	
Research Question	Method(s)
1. What spaces do black and white women identify as meaningful in the city of Richmond? a. What spaces do black and white women identify as feeling a sense of safety, belonging, inclusiveness and usefulness in the city of Richmond?	Focus Group + Community Mapping
2. How do black and white women want to be engaged during the planning process in the city of Richmond?	Focus Group
3. How do black and white women describe feelings of safety, belonging, inclusion and usefulness within a specific space in the city? a. How do black and white women experience the urban environment in the city of Richmond?	Exploratory Walk

Recruitment

The target population for this study was black and white women over the age of 18 who live in the city of Richmond. They were recruited primarily using the snowball method. An announcement containing an introduction to the research study, information about the researcher and the research's purpose and methods was sent to 150 women in total (*See Appendix 1)*. In addition to asking them to participate, they were also asked to share the announcement on various listservs and within their networks. The goal was to recruit a diverse group of participants across socioeconomic, age and educational level. Upon expressing interest in participating in a focus group, participants were screened by email or in-person and asked the following pre-screening questions: (1) Gender (2) Age (3) Race (4) If they resided in the city of Richmond. If participants indicated that they were a woman, above the age of 18 years old,

either black or white and resided in the city of Richmond, they were selected to participate in a focus group. They were then assigned to a focus group based on their indicated race and given information about the location, date and time of the focus group.

Participants

A total of 17 women (8 black, 9 white) participated in separate focus groups where they were asked about their experiences living in the city of Richmond. Each participant was asked to complete an anonymous Demographic Information Sheet (*See Appendix 2)*. To protect the identity of participants, they were asked to withhold their names and were given were an assigned number. Table 2 provides a summary of this demographic information based on racial group. A few statistics stood out. Overall, white and black focus group participants ranged from ages 18-34 and 18-65+, respectively. Black and white women both tended to be highly educated, indicating either a bachelors or advanced degree. Black women were more likely to report a mid-range income ($30,000-44,999) while white women reported a higher range ($45,000-59,999). White women reported longer tenure in Richmond than black women, 10.2 years and 7.1 years, respectively. White women reported higher income levels than black women, which is representative of the population within the city of Richmond. Both groups had higher educational levels in comparison to the city of Richmond population. For example 25% of women in the city of Richmond have a masters or advanced degree (United States Census), while in the research sample 100% of participants indicated having this credential.

Table 2:Participant Characteristics		
	Black Women (n=8)	White Women (n=9)
Age	Range 18-34	Range 18-65+
Highest Level of Education		
Less than high school	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
High School completion	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Some college and an associate's degree	0 (0%) 6 (75%)	0 (0%) 5 (56%)
Bachelor's degree	2 (25%)	4 (44%)
Advanced degree		
Income*		
Less than $14,999	1 (13%)	1 (11%)
$15,000-$29,999	2 (25%)	1 (11%)
$30,000-$44,999	4 (50%)	1 (11%)
$45,000-$59,999	1 (13%)	3 (33%)
$60,000 or more	0 (0%)	2 (22%)
Tenure in Richmond	*M*= 7.12 years	*M*= 10.2 years

Note: Percentages represent percent of the total number of participants in each group as indicated in the column.
* One White participant did not report income

Data Collection

A total of 4 focus groups were conducted: 2 for black women and 2 for white women. Focus groups contained no more than 6 participants and were created based on participant availability (Black women focus group samples: 6, 2; white women focus group samples: 5, 4). Each session included a community mapping activity and an exploratory walk through The Fan, a neighborhood in the city of Richmond. Each session was 2 hours (1 hour for the focus group and 1 hour for the exploratory walk and a debrief). Focus groups were audio recorded and later transcribed.
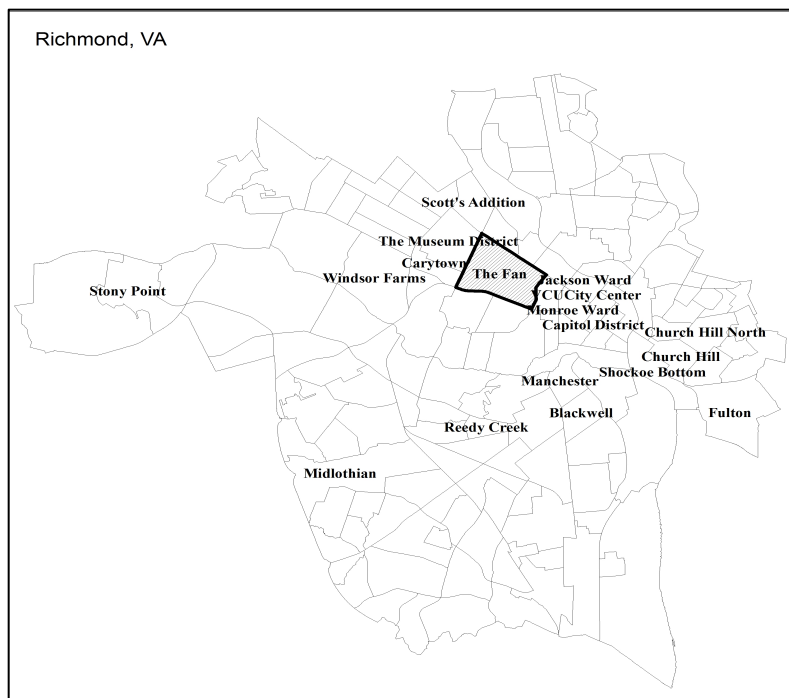
As participants arrived, each person was given a packet that contained a Demographic Information Sheet, an Informed Consent form (*See Appendix 3*) and a sheet to take notes during the exploratory walk *(See Appendix 4).* At the beginning of each session, the researcher provided a general overview of the study, gave each participant an assigned number, obtained consent from participants, provided guidelines for discussion and answered participant questions. After collecting the Demographics Information and Informed Consent forms, the researcher posed several open-ended questions to participants about their experiences living in the city of Richmond. The researcher followed a protocol (*See Appendix 5)* to ensure consistency amongst the focus groups. Once the open-ended questions came to an end, the researcher introduced the community mapping activity. A wall size map of the city of Richmond was displayed and participants were asked a series of questions about their experiences in the city. They were instructed to place different colored pins on neighborhoods, streets and other places where they felt safety, belonging, inclusion, and usefulness. After responding to several questions by placing pins on the map, the researcher asked participants to discuss their answers further in order to provide additional context. At the end of the community mapping activity, the research introduced and explained the exploratory walk.

Next, participants were led on a 0.5-mile walk through The Fan District *(See Figure 1, See Appendix 6*). The neighborhood was selected for research design and practical design. In terms of the research, the neighborhood provided participants an opportunity to observe multiple aspects of urban life in an area with many different people and moderately dense mixed-use development. This gave focus group participants a robust experience on which to comment and an actual urban neighborhood to explore their experiences. For practical reasons, this neighborhood was selected based its accessibility, walkability and mixed-used development. The

Fan is accessible via car and public transportation, which ensured that participants were able to get to the site in order to participate in the study. Secondly, the neighborhood's design allowed for a comfortable walk. Given the presence of sidewalks, crosswalks and other landscape features, this ensured that participants could travel through the neighborhood on foot comfortably and safely. Finally, the presence of mixed-use development, which includes residential, commercial and recreational use, was considered because it gave participants the opportunity to be in a multi-use environment and to comment on various aspects of a neighborhood in order to assess how these different elements impacted their experience. The focus groups took place during the day on both a Saturday and a Sunday in order to accommodate participant schedules.

Participants were given a sheet on which to take notes and to record their observations based on a series of guided questions. At the end of the exploratory walk, participants were escorted back to the focus group location and asked to discuss their experience. At the end of the session, participants were thanked and given additional information about the study.

Figure 1: The city of Richmond, VA

Data Analysis

Focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim from audio recordings. Recordings were then coded based on both preselected themes of safety, belonging, inclusion and usefulness and additional salient themes that emerged throughout focus groups. After emergent themes were identified, transcriptions were coded again to ensure the validity of these themes. Maps from the community exercise were digitized using City of Richmond shape files and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) 10.1 in order to reflect where pins had been placed on the map. Finally, notes from the exploratory walk were transcribed and coded based on the aforementioned themes as well as emergent themes. Audio footage from the exploratory walk was also transcribed and incorporated with other coded data. This data was combined for each participant group and analyzed to give the researcher a better understanding of how each group experienced the city based on key and emerging themes during focus groups and the exploratory walk and to provide a spatial representation of these themes based on the community mapping activity.

Table 3:Overview of Data Collection and Analysis

Method	Data Source	Data Collected	Data Analysis
Focus Groups	Black women (8) White women (9)	Participant Information Sheet (Demographic Data) Four 2-hour transcription of focus groups	Transcribed, theme and coded for safety, belonging, inclusion and usefulness as well as emergent themes
Community Map	Black women (8) White women (9) RichmondShapefiles	Digitized Community Map	A map of each of these themes was analyzed for spatial patterns
Exploratory Walk	Black women (8) White women (9)	Participant Notes from Exploratory Walk Notes Sheet	Transcribed, theme and coded for safety, belonging, inclusion and usefulness as well as emergent themes

Study Limitations

Although I have explored several key themes (safety, belonging, inclusion and usefulness), there

is opportunity to build on these themes during future research. Additionally, given the participant

characteristics for this study, which in general reflect a high education and economic level than

seen in the City of Richmond and the small sample size, this study does not necessarily reflect

the views of all black women who live in the city. Given additional resources, it would be

important to understand how women from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds discuss their

experiences in the City of Richmond. I posit that given the racialized concentration of poverty

throughout the city, particularly in the city's East End, results would emphasis spaces in these

neighborhoods. Finally, future research should also examine women's responses to walking

through other neighborhoods throughout the city, as different neighborhood characteristics and identities could provide a different experience for women.

Results

Focus groups, community mapping and exploratory walks revealed that the core themes of safety, belonging, inclusion and usefulness were relevant to both black and white women in measuring their experiences the city of Richmond. However, there were some distinct differences in how each of these elements was experienced by the two groups. The intersectionalities of race, class and gender played a significant role not only in how black women talked about city, these intersectionalities were the primary lenses through which they characterized their experiences. Overall, gender impacted how white women experienced the city but they rarely mentioned their race when talking about their lives in Richmond. The emergent themes captured in this research provide additional insight into the intricacies of black women's experiences throughout the city and, in comparison to white women, they suggest that black women have a more nuanced perspective of urban life in Richmond. Finally, results of this study revealed that black and white women have different perspectives on the city's development and engagement practices. Both pre-developed themes and emergent subthemes that impact the experiences of black and white women are discussed along with their viewpoints on city development and engagement. Table 4 summarizes the key themes and subthemes for each participant group.

Participant Race	Core themes and subthemes	City Development and Engagement Themes
Table 4: Core themes, subthemes and city development and engagement themes by Participant Race		

Black Women	**Safety**
	  - Physical safety
	Inclusion
	  - Artificial inclusion
	Belonging
	  - Comfort
	  - Being welcomed into a space
	  - Identity
	  - Community
	Usefulness
	Meets everyday and practical needs
		- Concerns about displacement
		- Black ownership
		- Access to economic capital
		- Formal engagement practices
		- Informal engagement practices

White Women	**Safety**
	  - Physical safety
	Inclusion
	  - Artificial inclusion
	Belonging
	  - Community
	Usefulness
	Meets everyday and practical needs
		- Concerns about displacement
		- Combatting homelessness
		- Formal engagement practices

Defining safety in the City of Richmond

For this research study, safety was defined as the state of being protected and subject to no harm. There were two types of safety that emerged. The first was physical safety, which is feeling physically protected by aspects of the built environment. The second was psychological safety, indicated by how secure someone feels mentally and emotionally within an environment. Safety resonated more deeply with black women than white women and in some cases was specifically integrated with issues of race. Two distinct factors determined where black women felt safe: (1) the presence of streetscape, such as adequate lighting and (2) the presence of other

people on the street. In some cases, black women also expressed that having other black people on the street provided a sense of psychological safety. White women, on the other hand, did not have as explicit reaction to safety in the city, but did acknowledge the neighborhoods where they felt safe walking as women. Therefore, results of this research as they pertain to safety indicate that physical safety and psychological safety, particularly for black women, are important in understanding their lives in the city.

For black women, when speaking about where they felt safe, they described that attributes of the physical environment, such as adequate lighting, often made them feel safer. They also described feeling a sense of safety when other people were on the street (eyes on the street). Places where black women identified feeling safe were The Fan, Carytown, Short Pump and Stony Point because these areas often other people around, meaning they were rarely alone, and had adequate lighting, meaning they could remain aware of their surroundings. When asked to further describe how streetscape impacted her sense of safety in the city, one black participant stated, "Well I think it goes back to what we were saying about it [a place] being well lit. Places that are well lit and kind of open in a way, like other people are walking around through there. You're not like the only one on the street." When discussing why she sometimes felt unsafe in areas throughout the city, another black participant stated, "And it's kind of dark in Richmond for it to be a city. In certain areas, why is it not lit enough, especially with the crime and homelessness that is around. That can make you nervous especially when you're new to the city."
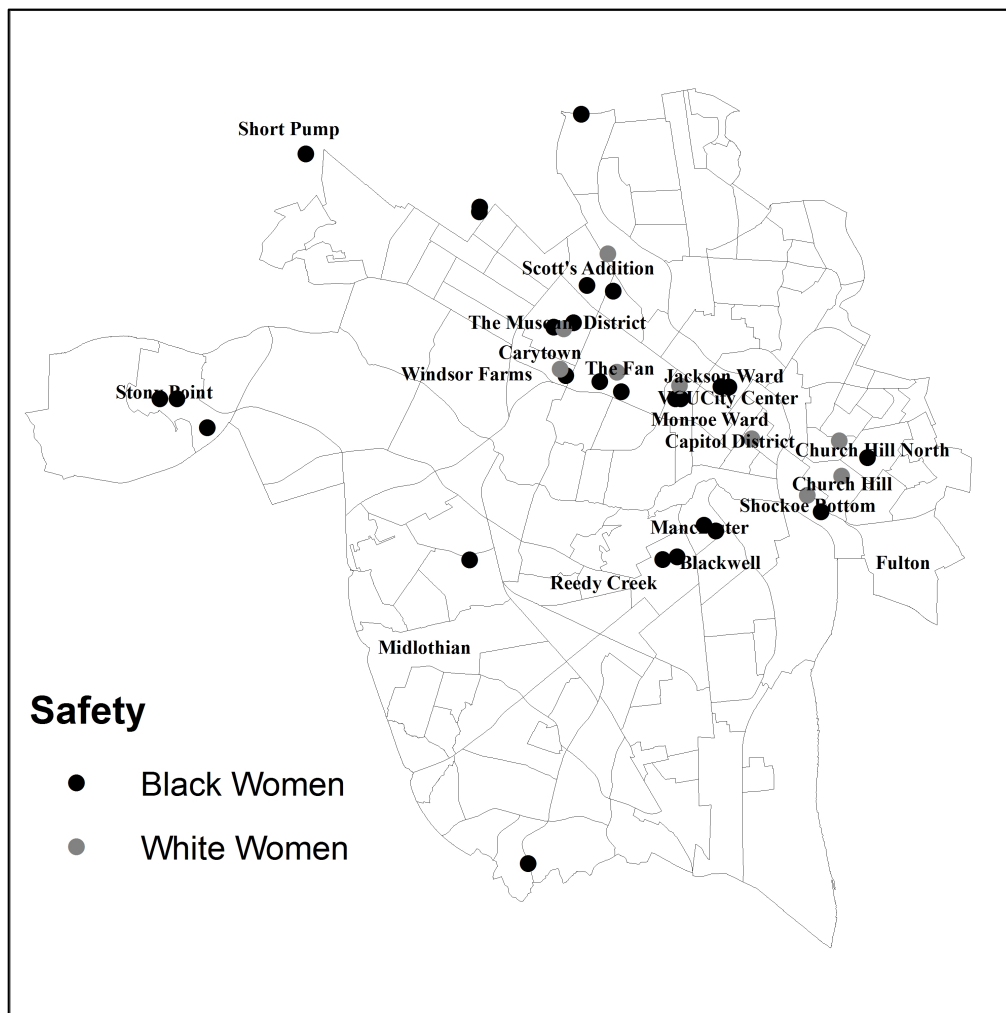
Black women also expressed that psychological safety played a role in how they experienced the city, indicated in places such as Jackson Ward and Manchester (Figure 2), because these neighborhoods not only allowed them to be around other people, but other black

people in particular. When asked to discuss in more detail, they specifically linked safety to the presence of other black people in a space, using language such as, "I am not the only one (black person)." This suggests that being in spaces with other black people helped to provide a sense of mental security for black women within the city.

For white women, while the topic of safety did not generate as strong a reaction, results suggested that walkability in the physical environment was linked to how safe they felt within the city. In particular, the places they felt safe visiting were the ones where they could walk during different times of the day. For example, notes from the exploratory walk revealed that white women described feeling safe in The Fan because they could walk there "during the day and mostly at night." Additionally, community map results (Figure 2) showed that white women mostly identified feeling safe in neighborhoods in the city that were highly walkable (i.e. Carytown, The Fan, Shockoe Bottom, Capitol District).

In examining the safety map these patterns are also highlighted. Overall, the discussion of safety resonated more with black women as indicated by the higher number of pins on the map, but it is also important to consider that the number of pins takes into account the spaces where psychological safety was considered. For physical safety, the neighborhoods that both black and white women indicated are known to have adequate lighting, eyes on the street and to be walkable. These neighborhoods include The Fan District, The Museum District and Carytown, and also areas further west, such as Stony Point.

Figure 2: Comparing Safety in the city of Richmond by Participant Race

Conditions within the physical environment that made both white and black women feel

sense of safety was streetscape that provided adequate lighting and a secure walk. Although

white women did not explicitly link walkability to the presence of adequate lighting in

neighborhoods, it appeared to be just as important, particularly because the areas they identified

as feeling safe enough to walk were also those known to have relatively adequate lighting. For

black women, in addition to physical safety, safety was attached to a psychological feeling

associated with the ability to be with other black people, which allowed them to avoid being "the

only one," a concept that will be discussed in greater detail.

Inclusion and Belonging

Inclusion was defined as being made a part of a space while belonging was the feeling of being a part of a space because one felt a deep connection to the people, activities and/or the space itself. These definitions were selected on the basis that each of these concepts provided different ways for understanding the relationships that individuals can have within their environments. Based on its definition, inclusion implies that someone else, a force outside of oneself, is doing the work to ensure that a person is allowed to participate and be a part of something. Belonging, on the other hand, is a more internal and emotional concept that measures one's ability to fit within a certain environment. However, it was difficult to disentangle the two concepts, as they were significantly intertwined for research participants and generated various emotionally and racially embedded responses, especially for black participants. Discussions ultimately highlighted the differences in levels of inclusion that black and white women feel in spaces throughout the city. In particular, both groups expressed feeling a sense of inclusion on the basis of being asked to spend money within a space, which will be discussed in more detail below. Belonging was discussed as a multifaceted concept that highlighted the many ways that black women's race impacted their experiences as it pertained to comfort, identity, ownership and community. Belonging for black women also highlighted a number of complex issues that provided a deeper understanding of their nuanced views of city life. For white women, belonging was often associated with spaces where they felt that they could be a part of a community with other women. Thus, it was necessary to explore the concepts of inclusion and belonging together because the understanding of one term provided context for better understanding the other.

Figure 3: Comparing Inclusion in the city of Richmond by Participant Race

Transactional Inclusion

Black and white women highlighted varying levels of inclusion when discussing their experiences in the city. In general, inclusion was associated with a surface level, transactional experience, where both felt that being made a part of a space was contingent upon their consumption of something the space offered. When grappling with the difference between belonging and inclusion, one white participant stated:

> "And so then belonging for me had to be about something other than that [transaction] so I was thinking about Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) again, a space where I'm not being asked to spend money but because the way the space is open, because its free…"

When asked to describe her placement of pins on the inclusion map, another white participant stated:

> "I realized that places I found myself being included were places that clearly wanted my money, so somewhere like Scott's Addition. I'm their target, I would be in their target audience for the brewery there, that I'm a young person without a family, I have disposable income, as somebody that works at the university…"

Black women also expressed experiences of inclusion based on transactional experiences. A black participant stated, "Like Carytown. You really only go there to buy something, to shop. And I feel included because of that, but otherwise I don't know if I'd go." Another dimension of the black women's experience with transactional inclusion was the feeling that it was sometimes superficial in white owned businesses. One black women stated:

> "Like there's a majority of white owned coffee shops where you'll go in but you know, it's (interactions) are not genuine, like you see them communicating with their own (other white people). You know, I'm a customer here too. I don't even really want to give you my money but I'm going to because of the convenience."

In reflecting on how they are "being made a part of a space" by others, it appears that these exchanges were not substantial and that they did not provide the opportunity for women to connect with people, or the space, on a deeper level, as is seen with belonging.

Black women expressed another type of transactional inclusion, one associated with their desire to spend money at black-owned establishments. They explained their decisions to

patronize black owned businesses in the city not only because they believed that it was

important to support black businesses financially, but these spaces were where they felt a great

sense of comfort. This comfort made them feel a deeper sense of inclusion. Participants went

on to discuss that their commitment to supporting black businesses was rooted in honoring the

rich history of black entrepreneur in the city. This deeper level, which I call "intentional

transactional inclusion," was expressed by one black participant in the following way:

> "I've been making it a point to try to support any sort of business,
> black businesses, or like anything to spend my dollar in that neighborhood (Jackson
> Ward) just to I don't know, to do my little part in keeping that alive. And so, that's a
> space for me that I go to a lot if I'm meeting someone I want to meet them there or
> suggest a place there."

These patterns are also highlighted on the inclusion map in Figure 3, where the

neighborhoods that black and white women identified feeling included were mostly areas known

for their commercial retail and that allowed them to consume. For example, Carytown offers a

variety of clothing and dining options, and The Fan and Scotts Addition, mostly dining. VCU was

also highlighted as a space where both groups felt included because a number of participants were

students at the University at one point or another. Finally, in Jackson Ward, black participants

described their consumption more positively, which suggests that they did not mind consuming

because it supported black businesses.

Black and white women's inclusion in the city was described as being dependent upon some

type of monetary exchange, where they felt as though they were being made a part of a space but

only as consumers of something the space offered; for some women these exchanges often felt

inauthentic and greatly surface level in comparison to the spaces in which they felt a sense of

belonging, which will be discussed in the next section. However, a nuance existed for black women

who, in discussing inclusion, highlighted the intentionality in which they attempted to spend money

at black owned business and the extent to which they did not mind doing so. The decision to spend money at black owned establishments was a conscious one. Thus, while transactional inclusion made black women feel a part of a space simply because they were purchasing something, intentional transactional inclusion at black owned businesses implied that they were more deeply connected and invested in these types of exchanges when they happened with other black people.

Belonging as Comfort, Identity and Community

Belonging was associated with an array of complex thoughts and emotions, particularly for black women. Having access to spaces with other black people present provided not only a sense of belonging, but also the feeling of comfort. Once in these spaces, black women formed a deeper connection when they felt as though they were genuinely welcomed and invited in, which they felt either through verbal embracement (i.e. "Hey, how you doin") or by observing aspects of the that reflected their identity, such as art and music. Black women's responses also indicated that belonging was deeply rooted in their desire to be in spaces that allowed them to be a part of a community with other black people in the city. As seen on the belonging map (*See Figure 4*), several spaces were identified as providing a sense of belonging, most notably Manchester, which is the location of Brewer's Cafe, a black owned coffee shop, and Jackson Ward, which is an historically black district in the city of Richmond. Other areas included familial spaces around the city, including residences.

In attempting to describe belonging, one black participant stated, "I would say it's an unspoken welcome…It's more of a feeling…like you belong there and you're wanted there." Another participant echoed this sentiment and said:

> "I don't have a specific space in mind but in general I tend to go to spaces
> where I'm not only welcomed but I feel like they want me there, not just like

I'm a client or customer. Like [if]…I walk in the door and they say "Hey, how you doin.'"

This theme was also reflected in notes from the exploratory walk through The Fan, where black women expressed that they did not feel a great sense of belonging because, according to one participant, there was "no representation of people of color" and according to another, The Fan was for "upper-middle class folks and often white folks." While they did not feel as though the neighborhood intentionally excluded them, the lack of representation of people of color generally made them feel as though they did not belong and therefore did not allow them to form as deep connection with the space as seen in other neighborhoods where they could more easily be around other black people

Figure 4: Comparing Belonging in the city of Richmond by Participant Race

In general, as indicated by the number of dots on the belonging map, black women identified feeling a sense of belonging in fewer spaces throughout the city. They indicated Jackson Ward, parts of Church Hill North, as some women lived here, and Manchester, as spaces to which they were connected.

For white women, many of these spaces were identified along the James River. Belonging was often associated with having a connection to a space, most notably spaces perceived to be more open and accessible to them or that allowed them to participate in active and passive recreation. For example, the James River and the VMFA were often mentioned as locations in the city where white women felt a deep sense of belonging. One participant stated:

> "I feel connected to the river because it's outdoors and there's usually a lot of
> people out there having fun. Also its another place where you can find solitude
> and do really healthy things for yourself and just feel good from a natural resource
> and the community that is around protecting the river, like using the river for
> recreation."

This was also highlighted on the belonging map, as white women identified a number of locations along the James River where they indicated feeling a sense of belonging.

For both black and white women, feeling a sense of belonging in a space was associated with a connection to the physical space itself or the activities taking place, but in general, white women identified more spaces in which they felt a sense of belonging throughout the city. Both groups of women spoke of belonging in terms of where they felt comfortable, could participate in the activities they felt connected to and allowed them to be a part of a community with others. Belonging was also connected to some aspect of their identity, for black women it was racial

identity and for white women, it was an identity of someone who appreciated the ability the access natural spaces throughout the city.

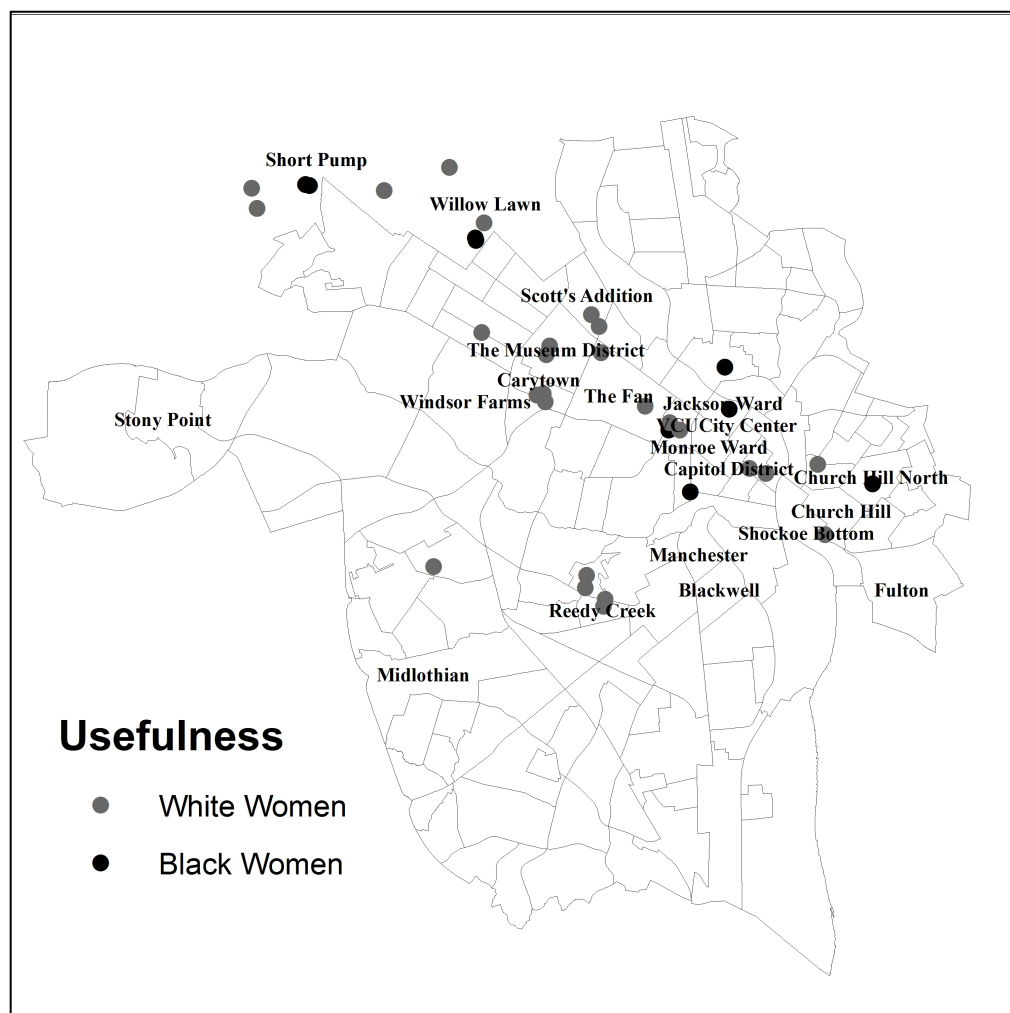**The Value of Everyday Places in the City of Richmond**

Black and white women were asked to identify where in the city was useful to them in their everyday life, meaning where they participated in activities to meet their everyday needs such as shopping, exercising, etc. While there were some distinctions in the places they identified, overall, both groups valued areas of the city that had very practical uses, which tended to be commercial areas either in the city of Richmond or outside of city limits.

One stop shop

Spaces identified as useful for both groups of women in the city did not differ significantly. These areas were typically those that served as a "one stop shop" for all of their needs (food, clothing, fitness, etc) and included areas such as Carytown, Short Pump and Willow Lawn, which are commercial shopping areas in or close to the city of Richmond. Although white women expressed negative opinions for areas such as Short Pump on the basis of design and lack of accessibility, they acknowledged that it was a useful location because it allowed them to run errands in one location in comparison to Richmond, where they were not always able to easily access basic necessities. Other than this aspect, they appreciated and preferred the urban environment within Richmond's city limits. Black women also indicated areas such as Jackson Ward as a useful place because it allowed them to access items to meet their basic needs, particularly food, while also giving them the opportunity to support black owned businesses in the neighborhood.

In examining the usefulness map (*See Figure 5*), the locations that both groups indicated are those that provide easy access to shopping, such as Carytown and The Fan. A number of women also identified useful areas outside of the City of Richmond, which due to the presence of a variety of retail options, allowed them to purchase basic necessities without having to drive to multiple locations. This suggests that areas that are most practical for both black and white women are those that offer a variety of retail options within a close proximity and that require the least amount of travel time. For black women, this also highlights that usefulness is found in areas that allow them to access local eateries and to support black businesses.

Figure 5: Comparing Usefulness in the city of Richmond by Participant Race

City Development and Engagement

In discussing the development of the city, both black and white women were connected to a range of social issues experienced throughout the city of Richmond, particularly those that affected vulnerable populations. For black women, however, there was a racial lens through which they viewed these issues, which impacted how they wanted to see the city to be developed. In particular, they saw development as a way to allow African-Americans, across all socio-economic statuses, to gain access to wealth in order to "become more prosperous in the city," as one participant stated. Both groups also expressed the presumption that development within the city was leading to displacement. Black women mainly discussed the displacement of working class black people whereas white women focused on the displacement of Richmond's homeless population.

Engagement for black women was highlighted by their commitment to advocate for themselves by being present at public meetings regarding community and planning issues and by using entrepreneurship as a way to development their own communities and to generate wealth within the black community. In contrast, white women viewed their role in development through traditional engagement, where accessing resources like the city government was seen as a way to enact change and become more involved in shaping the city's long-term future.

Thus, black women described two distinct types of engagement. The first was "having a seat at the table," where they believed that tradition planning meetings regarding issues in black community were important forms of engagement. This was seen as a form of direct self-advocacy, where black women sought to use their voices to support or critique the impacts of development efforts. However, some participants expressed that they were not interested in these

forms of traditional engagement and criticized meetings where they felt as though they were

being tokenized. They reflected on wanting to be more than a voice in the planning process,

particularly as it pertained to the development of the black community:

> "I've been in rooms and sometimes I've said no I'm not going to be in that room because I'm not going to be your token black person so that you can say well there was a little splash of color in here."

Black women who expressed this perspective also emphasized a desire to see economic

development efforts in the city that allowed black people to create sustainable livelihoods for

themselves. Participants expressed wanting to see the city to invest in African-American wealth

building by providing opportunities to access economic resources. In reflecting on what this

engagement might look like, one participant stated,

> "I want to own land and I would hope that more people around the table could own land and be able to use that ownership for whatever kind of community and to support [their] own lifestyle. And to be more involved that way rather than saying I just want you, the developer, to hear my voice."

Some black women also reflected on their perceptions of development in the city where they felt

as though investment in human and community capital was not a priority for developers. One

black participant described how, if given access to more economic resources, she would reinvest

in her own community:

> "I feel like when other people come in and take land in our neighborhoods, they want to maximize their profit off of every square foot and I'm like no, I want to maximize the productivity and what this can do for different elements of the community with every square foot and I'll use the minimum that I can use for myself."

Another participant believed that this access to wealth could help to create a healthy mix of

working, middle and upper class African-American neighborhoods in the city and help combat

the stark disparities currently seen in Richmond and stated,

"I'm committed to transforming the urban environment and not doing that as a commuter or as an outsider but as an insider. I think it matters that we have the spectrum of black people in neighborhoods. Because I think that's the thing that has changed for African-Americans neighborhoods. I mean white people moving in and out, we never sort of lived next to each other. I think it's a spectrum of class within the African-American community that is needed in the city."

Black women also expressed wanting to see the city of Richmond foster communities where black people, across classes, could thrive and become an integral part of the city's fabric and where change was driven from inside of the community and not outside:

"I would like to see more black owned spaces that are prospering and not only bringing in African-American clients but other clients from around the city. So there's like Brewers, which is really cool space, and there's Africana film festival which I think is awesome and that takes place in a couple different spaces. I would like to see those things replicated and successful. I think unfortunately what prosperous looks like is either gentrification or outsiders coming in and building up spaces in historically African American communities and prospering from the great locations and amenities and/or sacrificing because they want to invest in those communities and begin their transformation. But I would love if there were black business owners that could benefit from that and were doing the same."

For white women, engagement was characterized in a more traditional sense, where they reflected on how living in a city like Richmond allowed them access to spaceslike City Hall and government officials in a way they could not get in other larger cities. When asked what she enjoyed about Richmond, one white woman reflected, "It is a small town, I mean a large town so very quickly I could get involved in the government, and find out how things work. Which I couldn't in most other cities."

White women emphasized a participatory governance approach to engagement and believed that access to government could be an effective way to remain involved in the city's development:

"So yeah I think people should just be more involved. People don't want to go to city council meetings I understand that but you can read what happens at the meetings in the newspaper or watch the news at night."

Another participant believed that voting was a way to stay engaged: "My thought about people can improve engagement is getting involved in [the] city government and electing good leaders. I think our city suffers from lackluster leadership."

In reflecting on the future development of the city, both white and black women associated development with displacement and wanted to ensure that long time residents could continue to call the city home. A white participant stated:

"So I'll see development that is really cool and exciting and favors small businesses, and local artists and entrepreneurs but it is also changing the zoning in a way that may not always be fair or productive or inclusive. And I think that sometimes certain forces, social forces, whether that's like money or what not, will kind of take over certain spaces or repurpose them in a way that may not be in the best interest of the people of Richmond."

A black women echoed a similar sentiment: "I'm all here for the development, I just want them [developers] to consider the displacement of the people where they're developing. I just want the people who are there to be able to buy whatever they are offering."

Overall, Black women often tied development back to the black community and appeared to be concerned with how this development shaped the livelihoods of black residents. White women made little mention of race but instead expressed that they wanted to see more economic opportunities provided to the homeless throughout the city. Nonetheless, both perspectives show a concern for bringing more economic opportunity to the city's more vulnerable populations.

Engagement ranged from more traditional practices, where both black and white women envisioned working within pre-existing structures to become a part of the planning process, to

more nontraditional practices where, in particular, black women preferred to do work from within the city's black community.

Discussion and Conclusions

Given the city of Richmond's long and contentious history of urban planning interventions that have led to the social, political and economic immobilization of the black community, it is important to unearth the ways that black residents have managed to make a home for themselves despite these less than ideal conditions. As seen with figures like Maggie L. Walker, black women have continued to place value on aspects of urban life that reflect their deep commitment to making the city better, not only for themselves, but for the black community in general. Recognizing this commitment requires a deeper understanding of the distinct ways in which black women inhabit the city. Thus, this case study sought to examine the differences in how black and white women experience the urban environment in the city of Richmond and specifically examined the differences in where black and white women felt a sense of safety, belonging, inclusion and usefulness, how they wanted to see the city developed and how they wanted to be engaged throughout the planning process.

Results showed that there were distinct differences in the experiences that black and white women had in the city of Richmond. First, the intersections of race and gender played a significant role in shaping the experience of black women. Women made various references to their racial identities when discussing how they experienced the city in regard to safety, belonging and inclusion. Secondly, there were significant distinctions made between inclusion and belonging, the latter igniting intense discussion on how their race influenced where they felt as though they belonged in the city. This topic also brought to the surface black women's commitment to supporting black owned spaces and to accessing these spaces more frequently in

order to be around more black people. Thirdly, black women highlighted that they in fact wanted to be engaged in planning processes throughout the city, but offered both traditional and nontraditional ways of engagement. On the one hand, they saw public meetings as an effective way to advocate on behalf of themselves and their community, and on the other hand, they believed that enabling greater access to economic resources could allow black people to invest in their own community development efforts.

Literature on intersectionality highlights how planning has strived to understand how different racial, gender and socioeconomic identities intersect to inform one's experiences within the urban environment. The results of this study show that for black women in Richmond, race plays a significant role in how they experience, talk about and imagine the city. As black women, they expressed concern for the issues that specifically impacted them as women, such as physical safety, as well as the issues that impacted the larger black community of which they are a part, indicating that their lives in the city are informed by these intersecting identities.

Foster and Giles Corti (2008) posit that safety has tended to be a greater concern for women, and even more so for minorities. This notion is supported by the black women who participated in this research, as feeling a lack of safety was often associated with attributes of the physical environment but was also compounded by psychological feelings explicitly linked to race, where they expressed feeling least vulnerable in spaces that provided them access to other black people.

Thinking about the ways that planners attempt to protect the physical bodies of people who live in cities is one thing, but imagining how to impact feelings of emotional and mental safety is quite another. Given that urban planning has historically taken a technical and rational approach to developing the urban environment, it is no wonder that ensuring physical safety has

tended to focus on making improvements within the built environment, the assumption being that more lighting means more awareness or that better sidewalks means a safer experience for pedestrians. However, this study highlights that beneath the surface is a type of safety that can only be achieved by providing both access to physical spaces for black bodies but also allowing these bodies to convene in a way that provides residents with a sense of social security. More importantly, if it is the job of urban planners to aid development that ensures the safety of all residents, then it is important to continue to understand more covert forms of safety.

Discussions about belonging also highlighted the ways in which race impacted how black women felt throughout the city. Similar to safety, this concept was connected to the emotional feelings that black women felt in certain spaces, feelings that were deeply interwoven with their blackness. For black women, feeling a sense of belonging in the city suggested a desire to access spaces in Richmond where they could engage in practices that allowed them to play active roles in developing the black community, reflected their unique culture and identity and allowed them to physically be with other black people. Sen and Silverman (2013) argue that individuals have the right to make spaces their own and that the physical environment cannot exist without the humans that give it meaning, meaning that is "dependent upon larger political and economic contexts"(p. 3). Although this right to space is presumed to be a democratic tenant of urban life, results of this study suggested that black women did not always feel that they could freely access these types of black spaces, and if they did, there were very few options. For example, Manchester and Jackson Ward were often mentioned as the only key activity nodes for black life and culture in the city and thus, these areas also offered the greatest sense of belonging for residents and opportunities for them to socialize.

As seen in McDougall's discussion of "base communities" within Baltimore, which consisted of a small group of peers who "shared similar philosophy, life conditions and social objectives"(p.7), black women expressed a desire to more easily access these types base communities in the city of Richmond, as these spaces provided informal, yet important ways of engaging with other black people and providing a sense of comfort and community.

The experiences of black women's in the city are also supported by Collin's (2000) black feminist theory literature in which she asserts that black women must navigate and exist between two spaces, both physical and metaphysical, and that their intersectional identities make them constantly aware of their less dominant positions. As expressed by black women during focus groups, they were always aware of being "the other" in public spaces throughout the city, as reflected in comments such "being the only one" and wanting "see people who look like [them]." Even upon entering places in Richmond, black women expressed the desired to be welcomed, as greetings ensured them that they belonged and most importantly, that they had entered a space where they were less likely to have to navigate two worlds, even if temporarily.

Black women also expressed the various ways they chose to engage in planning issues throughout the city, highlighting the traditional and nontraditional practices adopted. From the planning profession's inception, planning processes have often been formalized: manuals have been written, tools for engagement have been adopted and ways of viewing the urban environment have become ingrained within the profession. However, black planning history reviewed the range of ways that black people have been engaged throughout their communities. In Richmond, black women also highlighted both traditional and nontraditional ways of engagement. On the one hand, they saw value in attending public meetings and using their voices to publicly advocate for change within the black community. On the other hand, they

felt as though it was enough to work internally and to build up resources in order to engage in their own community development effort. However, this research also affirms the ways that black women engage in everyday forms of planning by their decisions to support black business owned businesses. Even if not a part of a formal plan, this appeared to be black women's way of ensuring the economic vitality of the city's black community.

There is certainly opportunity to capitalize on black people's desire to support black owned businesses from an economic standpoint. Investing in the training and development of black entrepreneurs who want to remain in the city of Richmond provides additional opportunities for black women, and black people in general, to support Richmond's overall economy.

According to Sanderock (1998), these insurgent, or hidden, planning narratives become crucial in understanding the unique experiences of those from marginalized communities, such as black women. Intentionally capturing the perspectives of black women in the city of Richmond not only forces the planning profession to become more aware of black women's experiences, it reveals the varying narratives they have in regard to how they want to be engaged as residents.

In thinking about how to make Richmond a prosperous and diverse metropolis, the question becomes how urban planners can work to make the city be and feel like a home for black women. The first step is recognizing that the act of "making homes" (hooks, 1990, p.384) is both a literal and figurative concept that describes the efforts black communities have made to create physical and psychological spaces for black people to thrive. Black women who participated in Richmond focus groups expressed their desires to have access to capital because they not only wanted to be part of the city's economic fabric, but they also wanted to be a part of

making the city a homeplace, building a community where black people in the city can imagine a life where their blackness is not a threat but instead celebrated (Johnson, 2015). Thus, the making of a home within the city of Richmond can be seen as the development of spaces where black people, not just black women, can feel empowered and be active in shaping their own spaces and communities.

In thinking about future development in Richmond, it is important to consider how this development can lead not only to economic displacement but social displacement, where accessing these sorts of spaces can become limited in the black community, thus making it difficult for black women to develop the independent and collective voices they need to feel empowered to participate in planning processes. As urban planners in Richmond, it is our job to protect such spaces and to not allow development policies to take away the very aspects of urban life that others find meaningful and necessary within their community. Additionally, we must rid the profession of the presumptions made about what is and is not valuable in a community and what should or should not remain as a city develops. By continuing to engage black women, whose voices and livelihoods prove to be vital to the urban fabric, the city of Richmond can continue to broaden its scope around urban planning and restore its controversial past.

Recommendations: From theory to practice in the City of Richmond

In thinking about how the city can enable the development and sustainability of black spaces both formally and informally, there is an opportunity to broaden planning's scope in Richmond. Enabling shops like Brewers Café and businesses in Jackson Ward to thrive, which participants indicated as spaces they value, may come in the form of creating programs that provide more opportunities for minority businesses owners to have physical locations throughout the city. In developing a long-term vision for neighborhoods in Richmond, there could also be a

goal that a specific number of businesses be minority owned, as to diversify the city's economic portfolio. The promotion of more informal spaces, where black bodies can hang out and socialize freely, means making a commitment to ensuring that these types of spaces are not over-policed or removed altogether for development.

Finally, there are implications for the need to diversify the planning practice in order to ensure that the lens of race, class and gender are a part every development conversation. More importantly, as urban planners do become engaged with black communities in the city, the voices of black women should be seen as a valuable and irreplaceable resource for learning about community needs and prioritizing development in the black community.

Discussion

There are a number of implications for urban planners whose goals are to create a more inclusive practice and more authentically engage with black women. Thomas (2008) argues that changing *how* planning is thought about by those who practice it and making more salient the role of race is crucial in transforming urban planning. For black women in Richmond who often spoke of feeling a sense of belonging in places where there were other black people, this requires urban planners to attempt to translate these experiences into concrete plans for future development.

Additionally, as planners, particularly those whose role is to advocate on behalf of marginalized communities, it is important to understand that advocacy sometimes requires professional planners to take the backseat to less traditional and communal ways of planning that take place within communities. In fact, in seeing black women as pillars of the community who are capable of doing planning work on their own, there is opportunity to expand the way we think of the urban planning practice.

In the city of Richmond, black women comprise a third of the population. Thus, there is opportunity to leverage the experiences and knowledge of black women and to expand how black people are seen as a part of the city's fabric. The disparities between rich and poor in the city, which is a racial as well as socioeconomic divide, have prompted the city to provide more resources to vulnerable communities through social services as well as educational and job training programs. However, there is also a need to foster a sense of ownership, where residents can access economic capital, start businesses and become a sustainable part of Richmond's urban fabric in a way that also allows them to prioritize their own desires for community. Fostering a city where black people can feel a deep sense of belonging requires acknowledgement of the unique experiences of black people as well as a relinquishing of power from professional planners to communities that have developed their own unique set of values to guide development.

There is still a great deal to be learned about how black women experience the urban environment, but the results of this study reveal that in order to do so, an intersectional approach must be taken. Understanding that the urban experience for black women is impacted by number of complex positionalities is important for urban planners because it expands the lens through which black women are examined.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Recruitment Email

To: *(Recipient)*

Subject: *Seeking Participants for a Research Study on How Women Experience Urban Environment in the City of Richmond*

Hello,

My name is Mariah Williams and I am a Masters student in Virginia Commonwealth University's Urban and Regional Planning Program. I am currently conducting research exploring the different ways that black and white women experience the urban environment in the city of Richmond in an effort to understand how urban planners can better incorporate the unique experiences of these groups into our work.

I am seeking participants for a 2 hour focus group which will include an exploratory walk through a local Richmond neighborhood. During the focus group and exploratory walk, participants will be asked to talk about their experiences living in the city of Richmond, and more specifically, to identify the spaces they find meaningful and feel a sense of safety, belonging and inclusiveness. I am reaching out in hopes that you can share this opportunity with some women in your network or that you may be interested in participating.

I am recruiting black and white women who live in the city of Richmond and are over the age of 18. As of now, focus groups will take place on **Saturday, March 17th and Sunday, March 18th.** Upon reaching out to me, participants will receive information on the times and location of the focus group as well as additional information.

If you/they are interested in learning more about my research and participating, feel free to contact me.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have questions!

Thank you,
Mariah Williams

Appendix 2: Demographic Information Sheet

Assigned Focus Group Number _____

How long have you lived in the city of Richmond?

What is your current profession?

What is the 5-digit zip-code in which you live?

Age (Please Circle)

18 – 24 years old
25 – 34 years old
35 – 44 years old
45 – 54 years old
55 – 64 years old
65 and over years old

Highest Education Level (Please Circle)
Less than high school
High School completion
Some college and an associate's degree
Bachelor's degree
Advanced degree

Income (Please circle)
Less than $15,000
$15,000-$30,000
$30,000-$45,000
$45,000-$60,000
More than $60,000

Appendix 3: Research Subject Information and Consent Form

TITLE
Finding Homeplace: How Black Women Experience the Urban Environment

VCU IRB NO.
HM20012322

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the study staff to explain anything that you find unclear or confusing. You may take as much time as needed to consider your participation in this study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
This study aims to understand how black and white women experience the urban environment in the city of Richmond. One aspect of this research is to identify the spaces that they find meaningful throughout the city and to understand why these spaces are valued. Focus groups target women who reside in the city of Richmond who potentially use specific spaces. Our goal is to understand the ways in which black and white women describe their experience in the city. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have identified yourself as a black or white woman who lives in the city of Richmond.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY
If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to give written consent after you have had all of your questions answered and understand what participation entails.
In this study you will be asked to participate in a focus group which will include no more than five people. The focus group will include a discussion and community mapping activity that will last approximately one hour followed by a one hour exploratory walk through a neighborhood in Richmond where you will be asked to describe your experience. The discussion will be digitally recorded to allow for a complete content analysis.
During the focus group, you will be asked to answer questions about your experience living in the city of Richmond as well as to identify spaces and neighborhoods where you feel safe, a sense of belonging, inclusiveness and overall usefulness. During the community mapping activity, you will be asked to identify on a large printed map of Richmond the neighborhoods, corridors, buildings and other spaces that are meaningful to you in the city. The exploratory walk will take place in the city's Fan District, beginning at 2219 W. Main Street, walking west towards Carytown, North on S. Boulevard, East on Grove Avenue and South on N. Shields Avenue towards the final destination on W. Main Street (approximately 1 mile). During the walk, you will be asked questions about how specific spaces make you feel.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
This research is intended to be conducted in a safe and respectful environment for all participants. You are not obligated to answer questions and may end your participation at any time without giving a reason. There is minimal risk of potential harm in this research. In speaking about their experiences living in the city of Richmond during focus groups, there is a chance that participants will experience discomfort. During the exploratory walk, there will be physical activity required as participants walk through a selected neighborhood in the city of

Richmond. There is also a risk of a loss on confidentiality due to questions asking about their comfort level in certain places.

BENEFITS TO YOU AND OTHERS

You may not receive any direct benefit from this study, but the information obtained from your focus group may contribute to broader efforts to understand planning issues within the city of Richmond. Upon request, all participants will receive a courtesy copy of any published research derived from this study.

COSTS

There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend participating in the focus group.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Potentially identifiable information about you will consist of digital audio recordings of our focus group session. Data is being collected only for research purposes. Any answers that you provide during the focus group will be kept confidential; however, information from the study may be looked at or copied for research by Virginia Commonwealth University. Our findings from this study may be presented at conferences or published in research papers, your name will not be used. All electronic information (such as digital audio tapes and transcripts) will be kept in password protected files on a secure web-based system. All recorded audio will be destroyed immediately after transcription. Other physical records including consent forms will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate you may stop at any time without any penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.   Choosing not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled

QUESTIONS

 If you have any questions about this study in the future, please contact the student investigator at the following:

Mariah Williams

VCU Graduate Student, Urban and Regional Planning Program

Telephone: (202)679-9164

E-mail: mlwms24@gmail.com

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact:

Office for Research

Virginia Commonwealth University

800 East Leigh Street, Suite 3000

Box 980568 Richmond, VA 23298

Telephone: 804-827-2157

You may also contact this number for general questions, concerns or complaints about the research. Please call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else. Additional information about participation in research studies can be found at http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.htm.

CONSENT

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says I am willing to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of the consent form once I have agreed to participate.

_____

Participant name (printed)   Participant signature   Date

_____

Name of Person Obtaining   Signature   Date
Informed Consent (printed)

_____

Signature of Primary Investigator   Signature   Date

Appendix 4: Exploratory Walk Notes

Question	Yes	No	Notes
Do you feel safe walking through this neighborhood?			
Do you feel like you belong in this neighborhood?			
Do you feel included in this neighborhood?			
Is the particular neighborhood useful for you in your everyday life?			
Do you think this neighborhood was built with you in mind?			
What aspects of this neighborhood stand out to you?			
What are your initial reactions to being in this this neighborhood?			

What aspects of the built environment are you connected to most?.			
General observations about the space			

Appendix 5: Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Welcome and Overview

1. Welcome Everyone to the site and direct them to refreshments
2. Give participants the following:
    a. Information and Consent Form
    b. Background Information Sheet
    c. Assigned Focus Group Number (1-6, 7-11, 12-15)
3. Once everyone is settled, begin with welcoming them to the focus group.
   . Provide additional background
    a. Review forms they have been given
    b. Given participants time to review informed consent and to ask question - **15 minutes**
4. Begin by reviewing how the day will go
   . Opened Ended Questions
    a. Community Mapping Activity
    b. Exploratory Walk Activity - this should take 30 minutes and then we will return to this location to debrief and wrap up
5. Ask questions

Part 2: Open Ended Questions

1. Describe your experience living in the city of Richmond.
2. What do you enjoy most about the city? Least enjoy? Why?
3. What spaces do you frequent most? Least? Why?
4. What spaces in the city are most meaningful to you? Why?
5. What factors influence your decision to visit certain places in the city?
6. How would you like to see the city develop in the next 5-10 years?
7. How would you like to be engaged with planners in the city of Richmond?
8. What changes would you like to see in the city and how would you like to be involved of those changes?

Part 3: Community Mapping Activity

1. What spaces did you identify as feeling the safest in the city and why?
2. What spaces did you identify as feeling a sense of belonging and why?
3. Where do you feel included in the city and why?
4. What spaces do you find most useful and why?
5. What places do you avoid in the city and why?

Can be a neighborhood, specific place or a space

Part 4: Exploratory Walk

1. The Exploratory Walking Activity is design to get us all into a physical space in Richmond, in this case the fan neighborhood so that I can understand how you describe your experience in the space. This particular method is connect to something called visceral geography which really explores bodies in physical space, and in this case I am interested in looking at at you all categorize your physical bodies in a specific neighborhood in Richmond.

2. Provide directions
   a.   During this activity, we are going to walk about a mile with this being our starting and ending point. If for any reason you are unable to complete the walk, that is fine just please let me know.
   b.   You will receive two documents:
      1. A map of where we will be walking specifically
      2. A sheet for you to fill out during of immediately after the walk. This will be used for analysis.
      3. This walk will take no more than 30 minutes.
      4. Afterwards, we will return back here and you will be asked a few more questions and then we will wrap up.
3. Complete walk
4. Ask Discussion Questions
      1. Any initial reactions to this activity?
      2. In terms of the questions you were asked, are there any you would like to expand on further? If not,
      3. Did you indicate if you felt safe in the neighborhood, please explain? Did you indicate that you felt a sense of belong, please explain?
      4. Do you find this neighborhood useful?
      5. Any particular aspects of the neighborhood stand out? Why or why not?

Appendix 6: Exploratory Map Details

The Exploratory Walk will take place in the city's Fan District, beginning at 2219 W. Main Street, walking west towards Carytown, North on S. Boulevard, East on Grove Avenue and South on N. Shields Avenue towards the final destination on W. Main Street (See Attachment *Exploratory Walk: Fan District Map)*